



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

ANOTHER MAN'S BAG.

THE NARRATIVE OF EX-PROFESSOR CROSSLEY.

By W. E. CULE.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

IT has been observed, more than once, that I am peculiarly nervous about my luggage when I am travelling by train. It has also been observed that I exhibit more anxiety as to the identity of my goods than as to their safety, and that I am always especially careful lest I should carry off something belonging to another passenger. This peculiarity of mine has been ascribed to my natural eccentricity, and to the influence of advancing age. In justice to myself I am forced to show that it has quite another foundation.

It will be remembered that the loss of the Lenstoi Jewels was the sensation of the evening papers one day last year, and that the whole affair was completely hushed up by the press of the following morning. I am about to relate the whole history of this business; and it will be found a sufficient explanation of my nervousness with regard to luggage. I also relate the story because a garbled version of my adventure has already been circulated, and I am anxious to clear my name from the unworthy slanders which have been connected with it.

For many years I had been a lecturer on classical subjects at the Croxhampton University College; but just recently an unexpected legacy had enabled me to resign, and to devote myself to my favourite literary pursuits. I may say that my work has not been fruitless, and that I am regarded as something of an authority in more than one direction. This accounted for an invitation which I received at this time to visit Leachester, for the purpose of addressing the Carlyle Society in that city.

Leachester was an interesting literary centre, and the Carlyle Society there was one of the best. Moreover, my untiring researches had resulted in the discovery of certain private

Carlyle letters, which threw a curious side-light upon several phases of the prophet's work and home-life. Here was a chance of laying my discovery before a sympathetic audience ere I should make it public through the reviews. I gladly accepted the invitation, and prepared my lecture.

Both Croxhampton and Leachester are on the main line from London to Boltport, with little more than an hour's journey between them. On the day before the date agreed upon, I wrote to engage a room at the Leachester Royal Hotel, my somewhat nervous disposition making me unwilling to accept the private hospitality which had been offered. On the following day I caught an afternoon train and took a second-class compartment. In one corner of this was a young woman, with a child about twelve months old, and in another sat a stout man reading a newspaper. I took my seat facing him, and placed my bag in the rack above.

It may be said here that I have no liking for very young children, and always avoid them as much as possible. Their actions are not sufficiently regulated by reason to make them agreeable fellow-passengers. My fears in this case proved to be well founded, for from the moment of my appearance that child continued to stare at me in the most irritating manner. He had wide gray eyes, which were peculiarly vacant in expression; and my recollections are still vivid of the annoyance and discomfort I soon began to experience. My annoyance increased when I saw that the other passenger was watching the scene furtively from behind his newspaper.

Presently the child's mother seemed to notice my displeasure, and tried to divert his attention. Failing in this, she addressed herself to me.

'Shake your head at him, sir,' she said in a loud whisper.

'I beg your pardon?' I asked angrily.

She repeated her words, with an explanation. 'Shake your head at him, sir. He'll be all right then. He is very much attracted by spectacles.'

It was an absurd and ridiculous position to be in. I could not have shaken my head at that moment to save my life. Some of my mingled emotions, however, might have appeared in my face too plainly, for the child gave a sudden scream and turned away.

'Oh!' said the woman, most unreasonably, 'now you have frightened him. I am sure there was no need to glare like that;' and she turned to the task of soothing him again in a manner which combined pity for her boy with resentment towards me. I felt heartily sorry that I had not been more careful in my choice of a carriage; but at that point the other passenger came to my assistance. He had been watching throughout the incident, and evidently sympathised with me. Leaning forward, he spoke in a low tone, gravely:

'Shocking nuisance, children!'

'Yes,' I said, 'they are. I have always thought so.'

'Of course,' he went on, 'the world cannot exactly do without them. But I do think they ought to be kept out of the way as much as possible. In travelling, they ought to have carriages to themselves.'

I felt that this was a reasonable idea, and we were soon in perfect agreement. During the conversation that followed I tried to form some opinion as to the stranger's quality and position. His appearance was comfortable and substantial, and his manner free almost to the point of coarseness; but he had travelled a good deal in this country and could observe with shrewdness. He had a blonde-bearded, rather good-natured face, and I came to the conclusion that he was a well-to-do business man.

It is my habit to learn as much as possible about the people I meet. This does not arise from any vulgar inquisitiveness, but rather, I hope, from a wish to know my fellow-creatures. Their affairs are always interesting to me; and I have often stumbled upon information in this way which I have found very useful later. But for this custom of mine I should never have discovered those Carlyle letters.

I began, therefore, to make inquiries, and soon learned that my fellow-passenger was a commercial traveller, that he belonged to Boltport, and that he represented a firm called Fillottsons. I also learned that Fillottsons had something to do with jewellery; but that was all I could gather. The man was silent as to what had been his business in London, meeting my inquiries in that direction with a reserve which I had cause to remember later. Even at the time I could not help feeling that it was slightly suspicious,

especially as he had been so free on other points. I also remembered, afterwards, that he contrived presently to change the subject, and to engage me in an account of my invitation to Leachester and my business there.

Messrs Fillottsons' representative knew Leachester slightly, and was acquainted with the Royal Hotel, which he had visited on one occasion. He knew little, however, of Carlyle, his life having been too full of movement to allow of much save newspaper reading. Still, he displayed an intelligent interest in the subject, and this interest was deepened when I related my discovery of the unpublished letters. I was just concluding an account of this discovery when we arrived at Leachester.

During the talk I had quite forgotten the other occupants of the compartment; but it now appeared that their destination was the same as mine. My new acquaintance opened the door for them; and as they passed me I found that the mother had not forgotten the unpleasant incident which had taken place. She gave me a resentful look as she alighted, and this caused me to feel a return of the former discomfort. It was during this temporary confusion that I took down my bag and left the carriage.

'I am glad to have met you, sir,' said the man from Boltport; 'and I hope we shall meet again. Will you accept my card?'

We exchanged cards, and shook hands cordially. I may say here that I have rarely met a more attentive and intelligent listener. A minute later I was being driven through the streets in the Royal Hotel omnibus.

When I reached the building my first act was to take my bag up to my room. This room was No. 17, on the first landing. When I came down it was about five o'clock, and my meeting was to commence at eight. I took a hearty tea, and then went out to call upon the secretary of the Carlyle Society.

This was the headmaster of the Grammar School, and he received me with every pleasure. The evening's meeting promised to be an excellent one; Dean Houghton, himself the author of a volume on Carlyle, having promised to attend, as well as his guest, Canon Worcester. I felt that everything was working for the success of my lecture, and for the suitable reception of my important disclosures. It was in good spirits that I made my way back to the hotel.

This was at about seven o'clock, so I decided to dress at once, and then to give a few minutes to my manuscript. Although I never refer to my papers after my lecture has commenced, I always keep them before me for safety. On this occasion, especially, it would be just as well to make a thorough preparation.

I went up to my room and proceeded to open my bag. It struck me as I lifted it to a chair that it was a trifle weighty, considering that it

contained only my manuscript, my dress-clothes, and one or two other light articles. This reflection was followed by another, made as I took out my keys: the leather of the bag seemed rather cleaner and less worn than I had fancied it to be. I found no difficulty about it, however, for the key turned easily in the lock. Then I loosened the straps and slipped back the catches.

At that point my impressions were fully explained. The first thing I should have seen was my manuscript; but my manuscript was not there. Instead, there were three or four magazines of a popular class, and beneath them several articles of clothing, tightly packed. I had carried off and opened some one else's bag.

On discovering that this was not my bag it was my plain duty to close the thing at once. But my thoughts had flown to the loss of my manuscript; and in a moment of pure absent-mindedness I removed the layer of clothing to see what lay beneath.

What I saw there was another layer, of a very different character. Packed neatly beneath the clothes, against the side of the bag, were some half-dozen leather cases of a particularly handsome description. They were of various sizes, and each of them bore a coronet in gilt.

My curiosity was now awakened, and under its influence I went a little farther. Picking up the largest case, I examined it carefully. It was locked, but there was a small key, apparently of silver, in the lock. After a moment's hesitation, I turned this key and raised the lid.

My first glimpse of the contents gave me a vivid impression of brilliance and beauty. At the second glance this impression was confirmed and strengthened. The object at which I gazed was a necklace of large diamonds!

Just above me was the white globe of the gas-jet. The blaze of light fell directly upon the necklace, and, as my hand shook, the rays were reflected from the jewels in a maze of changeful colours. Some of the stones, it seemed to me, were of extraordinary size, while the smaller ones were set in tiny clusters. There was a setting of almost invisible gold-work, and the whole rested on a bed of white velvet.

I knew nothing of jewels, or at least no more than the ordinary man whose only knowledge is obtained by an occasional glance at a jeweller's window. I had an impression that the article in my hand represented a very large sum of money. It was worth hundreds of pounds — perhaps thousands!

Presently I closed the case and laid it down. There were five others, all smaller cases than the first; and I continued my investigations. It seems to me that the peculiar circumstances form a sufficient excuse for my conduct. In spite of what the Croxhampton students may say, I am

not inquisitive by nature, and have a strong dislike for meddling of any kind.

I took up the other cases and examined them in turn; but my impressions as to their contents are too confused to enable me to give a detailed description. Let it be enough to say that two of the cases contained bracelets, evidently intended to match the necklace; two others, and those the smallest, revealed a pair of diamond ear-drops; and the final case contained a kind of diamond spray, intended, as I guessed, to be fastened in the hair.

This last article was the finest of all. Most of the stones were small ones; but their smallness only served to set off the magnificent gem which gleamed in the centre of the ornament. The stone was circular in shape, and almost as large as the half of a walnut-shell. To increase the resemblance, the under side, where it was laid in the gold-setting, was flat. The face, however, was cut into a large number of triangular facets, each of which appeared to gather and refract, with thousandfold brilliancy, the rays of the gaslight. After I had gazed a few moments I felt myself almost dazzled by the unparalleled lustre. This was a diamond indeed!

In sheer bewilderment I sat down on a chair that stood near, and looked about me. My room was a plain and comfortable one, but utterly out of keeping with the nature of my discovery. Wealth? There seemed to be the wealth of Croesus in this common, everyday travelling-bag. What did it mean? Where had it come from? And as I asked myself that question I suddenly saw the solution of the mystery. This took the form of a card, which lay upon the table. I had laid it there myself when I had entered the room first. It was a slip of white, bearing, in three lines, the inscription: 'Mr Charles Ashdon. Fillottsons Brothers, 191 Broadway, Boltport.'

'Cheap jewellery!' I murmured, with quick remembrance.

Cheap jewellery—of course! It was now as clear as possible. The articles at which I had been looking with the wonder of ignorance were representative of Mr Charles Ashdon's business. Glittering, showy, loud. Diamonds indeed! I gazed again at the spray, and the proximity of that slip of pasteboard seemed to give it a very different appearance. It did not gleam so brilliantly; it did not gather up and reflect the light in such a glorious manner. Pshaw! I had seen 'rubies' of that size marked in toyshop windows at sixpence each!

I closed the case, locked it, and returned it to its place. Then I repacked the other articles and fastened the bag. It was fully time now to attend to my own affairs, so I hastened to summon a waiter. The man who came was a quick and willing fellow, who understood the situation at a glance. He told me of an establish-

ment in the next street where I could easily obtain the dress-clothes I needed ; and I lost no time in seeking it. There was no difficulty after this, and by a quarter to eight I was ready for my engagement. I was forced to make up for the want of my manuscript by a few notes

hastily written, but I felt no fear in that direction. Years of similar work had trained my memory well.

At eight o'clock a cab was at the door, and I set out for the hall. By that time I had quite forgotten Mr Ashdon's bag.

ARMY NURSES.

WHILE the columns of all the daily papers have been taken up with the deeds of our soldiers in the field, and the pages of the illustrated journals have depicted week by week the various incidents of the campaign, the great work of the Army Nursing Sisters has been carried on steadily and quietly, almost unnoticed by the otherwise ubiquitous war correspondent. Only a short pathetic paragraph now and then, such as, 'PIETERMARITZBURG, Jan. 8.—Nurse —, Army Nursing Staff, died of dysentery,' reminds the reader that brave women are sharing the privations and dangers of the troops actually in contact with the enemy. Even though the nurses may not actually attend to their patients under fire—and even this is by no means unknown—the risks they incur while on active service are scarcely less than those of men under the hottest fire.

Army nurses have to pass through a severe course of training before they are considered competent to take care of Tommy Atkins and his officers when they may be ill or wounded. As a rule, the first experiences of a nurse are gained in one or more of our great London hospitals, such as St Thomas's or Guy's, where they make a general acquaintance with their duties ; and it is here that those whose hearts are not in the work are soon weeded out. After a time they pass to smaller hospitals, and there they gain much practical acquaintance with accident and disease, and, moreover, acquire a proper amount of self-confidence and resource in cases of emergency.

Their names having been entered as army probationers, they are required in due course to proceed to Netley Hospital, where they meet the regular Army Nursing Staff, pick up service methods and routine, and begin to appreciate the red-tape of the War Office. Much as that ancient institution has to answer for, there are strange tales of Bumbledom even in connection with this branch of the service.

The nurses' term as probationers being ended, they are, if physically suitable, duly placed on the Army List, and become 'soldiers of the Queen.' Their first station is usually at home, and the remainder of the time they remain in Her Majesty's service is divided between home and abroad in much the same proportion as that of the line regiments.

In time of peace their life is much the same as in a civilian hospital at home, with the exception that the staff of nurses is much smaller, a large portion of the work, including all night-duty, being done by orderlies. In time of war, however, things are different. It so happens that this country has not been involved in any serious war since the days of the Crimea, and therefore it is necessary to turn to the present campaign to gain any practical knowledge of what an army nursing sister may be called upon to go through. At home things are carried on much as in time of peace ; but Netley and the various other station hospitals are soon filled up with batches of wounded invalided home. There are not, however, many serious cases, as the majority of the wounded have reached a certain stage of convalescence either before or during the voyage home.

To find a parallel to the noble work of Florence Nightingale we must turn to events at the seat of war in South Africa. The party of nurses whose fortunes we shall follow left England shortly before the declaration of war, in the *Tintagel Castle*. The voyage was slow and without incident, and in due time they arrived at Capetown. Here they found instructions to proceed to Durban, and from thence on to Pietermaritzburg. Their arrival was just after the battles of Glencoe and Elandslaagte, and two of the party were ordered to proceed at once to Ladysmith, where they arrived just in time to be shut in for the siege. Two others were under orders to proceed to Colenso ; but the rapidity of the Boer advance into Natal necessitated their remaining at Pietermaritzburg, which was now actually expecting an attack. A large number of wounded, both of our own men and of the enemy, were in the hospitals here. These were sent down as quickly as possible from the more exposed positions ; and for one night the nurses waited in an empty hospital expecting to hear the three shots that were to announce the commencement of the Boer attack. However, as the Boers never advanced so far, they were occupied for the next few weeks in attending the wounded from the various small skirmishes at the front, and the ordinary cases of sickness, chiefly enteric fever and dysentery, which always dog the steps of an army on active service. Both our men and the Boers greatly appreciated the

care of the nurses, one of the Boer officers inviting a nurse to visit him at his home in the Transvaal.

After some weeks they were ordered to go on to Estcourt, which was now clear of the enemy. The journey was made by rail, and was slow and tedious owing to repeated stoppages to drop wood for fuel and stores of various kinds. The nurses experienced great kindness both from officers and men on the way, who vied with each other to do them such small services as were in their power, such as bringing them water and food. Their stay at Estcourt was terminated by a sudden call to Chieveley, General Buller's advanced base.

The battle of the Tugela was in progress. The train consisted of a number of trucks loaded with wood for fuel, all the coal in the colony being now exhausted. Repeated stoppages were made while this was disposed of, the carriages being left for long periods. Towards the end of the day they met train-loads of wounded returning south. On arrival there was no time to be lost. The hospital and operating tents were crowded, and the wounded laid in numbers outside. Inside it was impossible to move without stepping over the bodies of wounded men. All night the work went on in the operating-tent. One man, who was thought to have died after he was brought in, was put down near the operating-table till he could be carried out; when, an amputated leg having fallen on him, he was seen to move.

In and around the hospital-tent there were three hundred and seventy badly wounded cases, with only two army nursing sisters and two volunteer nurses to look after them. All night men were dying. Towards morning one of the nurses who had stayed for a few moments with a dying officer

had an opportunity for a short rest. It was bitterly cold, and there was not a blanket or covering to be found. At last she had to cover herself with one of the blankets in which the officer died.

The troops were retreating past the hospital all night, and it was feared that the Boers would follow up their advantage and attack the base camp; but fortunately they had suffered too severely to attempt it.

It is probable that the arrangements for the care of the wounded are more complete in this campaign than in any previous one; and Sir William MacCormac has written in the highest terms of praise of the work done by the Army Medical Staff. Yet the risk of infection must be enormous. Already one nurse of a party of four has gone down with dysentery from this camp; and, besides this and enteric fever, there is great danger from blood-poisoning in a hundred forms. Precautions scrupulously observed in nursing-practice at home are next to impossible in the field. With the greatest difficulty the nurses manage to keep clean—an absolute essential. At such times as these all work done in the hospital-tents is at the highest possible pressure of brain and body; and as the strain is never relaxed for hours together, the wonder is how women can stand it. The grim struggle with death and disease has to be carried on in silence; and it is only at long intervals that anything is heard of it at home.

Whatever the progress of the campaign, the work of these brave women goes on without interruption; so, wherever we read of victory or reverse, we should remember the army nurses are close at hand doing their utmost to mitigate the horrors of war.

OF ROYAL BLOOD.

A STORY OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

By WILLIAM LE QUEUX.

CHAPTER XIX.—MÉLÉANIE'S FEAR.



'YOU! Mélanie!' I gasped, bewildered, turning to her. 'Tell me what has happened. Why has this man attacked you?'

However, ere she could reply, Krauss, an imprecation escaping

him, had slunk away and was lost in the darkness among the trees. I started to follow him and demand an explanation, for my blood was up now that I recognised he had attacked the woman I loved; but she called me back in an authoritative voice, and in a moment I was again at her side.

Breathless and panting, she was greatly agitated, a terrible anxiety apparently consuming her, for the man had evidently made a most desperate,

and perhaps preconcerted, attempt to take her life. So I suggested that she should walk with me to my rooms, only a short distance off, and there rest until she had recovered sufficiently to return to the Palace. A little brandy would revive her.

This midnight discovery was certainly a most remarkable and startling one. Few in Brussels would have dreamed that the Princess Mélanie of Hapsburg, the beautiful girl whom every one admired, would be wandering beneath the trees in the boulevard after midnight; and certainly this attempt to take her life was a most sensational and entirely unaccountable incident. Only one man on earth I hated and detested, and it was this villainous spy whom I believed to be still

serving his well-deserved life-sentence in the state-prison at Budapest. The knowledge that he was at large had caused me to stand before him dumfounded.

On one occasion, on that gray morning when he stood in the barrack-square with his hands manacled while his decorations and the facings of his uniform were torn from his coat and his sword broken before the assembled troops, he had vowed to take my life. That was the last time I had seen him, for he had been marched away to prison as a spy and a traitor; while the woman Judith Kohn, to whom his degradation was in a great measure due, had, with the assistance of the German Embassy, fled across the frontier and escaped. Yet I remembered well, as though it were but yesterday, the evil look in his eyes as he swore to kill me because I had brought about his exposure by intercepting certain plans which he had offered for sale. Mine was, I confess, a delicate piece of espionage; but it was in the interests of my own dear England, and in order to further the success of the diplomacy of my chief.

Now, at this critical moment of the European outlook, we had met once more, and our re-encounter had certainly been in most extraordinary circumstances. In my ears the shrill cry of my beloved still sounded, and I regretted that I had not detained him. True, he had escaped into the darkness; but without doubt our recognition had been mutual.

'You are very kind, Philip,' she managed to gasp. 'It is fortunate you were near, or—or he would, I believe, have strangled me. A little brandy would do me good. I feel so weak and faint.'

'Then come,' I said. 'Let's get away, for the police may have been alarmed by your cry;' and, taking her arm tenderly, I managed to lead her as far as the Place Louise, where we ascended to my little flat, a rather pleasant place in daytime, as it overlooked the gayest and liveliest spot in all Brussels.

Fortunately Barnes, my English manservant, had retired to bed, as he did invariably at eleven if I were not in; therefore we were alone; and on gaining the sitting-room Mélanie staggered back into my arm-chair exhausted, her beautiful face pale as death, her limbs trembling, her dark eyes fixed before her with a strange, haggard look I had never before seen in them. Indeed, she had walked with me as one dazed or in a dream, and not until I had made her swallow a small glass of Cognac did she revive and become fully cognisant of things around her.

I saw that the white silk gown she wore—an extremely handsome evening-dress, trimmed with pearls—was soiled and torn, while her dark hair had been sadly disarranged in the desperate struggle. There were dark, livid marks, too, upon her white throat, where the hands of her

assailant had gripped her in his dastardly attempt to crush out her life.

I asked if she had not a cape, or some covering for her shoulders, thinking it strange that she should go forth in the night-air without protection; but she mechanically replied that she supposed it had fallen off in the boulevard.

'Tell me, Mélanie, what occurred,' I asked at last, standing beside her chair, bending over her and holding her hand tenderly. Jewels—beautiful rubies, emeralds, and diamonds—sparkled on her slim white fingers, while upon her wrist was an antique bracelet, a broad band of gold, with an inscription in raised Roman characters: '*Vita ludus et scena est.*' It was a fine ornament which, as I afterwards learnt, had been discovered during some excavations near the old town of Tréves, once a Roman stronghold.

To my question she remained dumb. She sighed heavily, and her eyes were turned to mine with a strange, fixed look which alarmed me. Her hand trembled; then a shudder ran through her.

'You are cold,' I said; and, getting my flannel tennis-coat, I placed it about her shoulders.

She thanked me in a low, weak voice; then, resting her head upon the cushion I placed for her, she closed her eyes. I saw she was exhausted, and noticed further that the dark marks on her throat were gradually assuming a deeper hue.

For some time I stood beside her, holding her hand; but it seemed as though she had dropped off to sleep; therefore I crept away and obtained a whisky and soda for myself, for, truth to tell, I had been unnerved by this unexpected re-encounter.

Oswald Krauss, judging by his dress, was prospering. He was certainly no common footpad. Mélanie's words when he had seized her in his terrible paroxysm of anger were very strange, and sounded as though they were both well known to each other. She had promised to accede to his demands on condition that he spared her. What, I wondered, did he seek of her? It was indeed an extraordinary fact to discover the Princess Mélanie of Hapsburg walking alone in the early hours of the morning with a man whose mean, despicable crime had brought upon him a well-deserved life-sentence. Again, how he had escaped was a mystery. The Austrian Government are not given to releasing prisoners condemned for treason. That man had broken his oath to his Emperor and betrayed his country in a manner so ingenious as to be almost incredible; yet I found him at large here, in Brussels, endeavouring to obtain by threats something which my beloved refused to grant. What could it be? I wondered. Could he really be the mysterious lover she was in the habit of meeting, the man spoken of by Paul Yermoloff?

I sat opposite her, watching her as she slept, knowing that when she awoke she would be

calmer and more collected. Her absence from the Palace would, I feared, be noted; therefore, although anxious to learn the truth of this mysterious attack, I was also eager that she should return. Probably her maid was in the secret of these night excursions of hers, just as she knew of her early morning cycling.

At last, after perhaps half-an-hour, she sat up and glanced around her wonderingly. I was beside her, on my knees, in an instant.

'I hope you feel better, Mélanie,' I said eagerly.

'Yes,' she answered weakly. 'At first—do you know?—I wondered what place this was. But now I remember all. I—I am with you!' And she smiled.

'Yes,' I said, bending and kissing her hand. 'It was extremely fortunate that I chanced to be near. But tell me,' I added, 'what do you know of that man? Was he a stranger to you?'

'No,' she answered, sighing deeply. 'He is, alas! no stranger.'

'But why did he make such a desperate attempt upon you?' I inquired.

She hesitated. Her fingers closed tightly upon mine.

'Because I would not comply with his demand.'

'Tell me,' I demanded, 'what is the nature of your relations with him?'

'I hate him,' she cried in desperation. 'I hate and detest him!'

'Am I correct in supposing that you have met this man time after time in the boulevard, or in the dark avenues of the Park?'

'I have met him many times. I have met him because I have been forced to do so,' she answered, in desperation.

'And he is your lover!' I said harshly.

'No, no, Philip!' she cried protestingly. 'I swear he is not. Lover! Why, I detest the sight of him!'

'Why?'

She was silent. I saw by the twitching of the muscles of her face how agitated she had become. This allegation of mine had brought a dark and determined look upon her countenance; while, on my part, the discovery had aroused within me a natural jealousy. The whisperings I had heard alleging that the Princess Mélanie had a secret lover were evidently based upon fact, for a woman does not steal out and meet a man at night with risk of detection and exposure unless there is some very strong incentive.

'You do not answer my question,' I said in a calmer tone.

'I hate him because of all the past,' she responded at length after some further hesitation.

'Is its recollection so very bitter, then?' I inquired.

'Alas! yes,' she sighed; then fixing her dark tearful eyes upon mine, she added hoarsely, 'It is so bitter and hateful, Philip, that sometimes I regret that I had not died long ago.'

'Come,' I said, 'you must not speak so gloomily. Tell me, what has occurred between you to-night?'

'Ah, no!' she answered quickly. 'I cannot.'

'But I love you, Mélanie,' I protested earnestly. 'You have told me, too, that I have a place in your heart. Cannot you, therefore, trust me with your secret?'

'It is impossible,' she faltered.

'Why?'

'Because I dare not.'

'Then you are in fear of him?' I said. 'You told me that you were in dread of that man who watched us on the night of the State ball.'

'It is the truth. Fear of them both holds me in silence,' she replied.

'But is it wise to wander the boulevards at night?' I queried.

'I have met that man only because he compelled me,' she answered. 'Ah! you do not know—you can never know—what I have suffered, Philip, or you would not speak thus.'

'Why, then, do you not place faith in me and explain? I might assist you. Your position does not allow you the freedom which others have; therefore, why not let me be your confidant and friend? Did you not tell me only the other day that you might perhaps require my help? Surely you require some assistance when I have witnessed this dastardly attempt upon you.'

'Yes,' she shuddered, 'I believe that he would have killed me.'

'But what reason has he for acting thus?' I inquired. 'What does he want of you?'

She hesitated. Her brows contracted for a moment in thought, then she answered:

'I am in possession of a secret which he is anxious to learn. I refused to divulge it, and in order to wring it from me he attempted to strangle me.'

'A secret?' I repeated, puzzled. 'Has it anything to do with that man's past?'

'No,' she answered. 'But what do you know regarding his past? Are you acquainted with him?'

'I know him too well,' I replied in a hard voice. 'His name is Oswald Krauss; he is a native of Vienna, and an ex-captain of artillery.'

She bowed her head in the affirmative.

'And what else?' she asked in a low, mechanical tone.

'For the rest,' I said, 'he was discovered in the act of selling to a German agent in Budapest detailed plans of three of the principal frontier fortresses, arrested, and condemned by court-martial to imprisonment for life as a spy and a traitor.'

'How are you aware of all this?' she in-

quired, her eyes turned upon me in blank surprise.

'Because that man was first successful in obtaining knowledge of certain of our diplomatic secrets, which he endeavoured to sell to his employers, the German Government, and was only prevented by a discovery which I myself made. Then, fearing lest he should make a second attempt, I kept watch upon him, and found that not only did he seek to sell England's secrets to her enemies, but that he was also offering the plans of his own country's defences.'

'It was you who discovered that?' she gasped, her face pale in an instant.

'I placed my discovery before the Austrian Minister of War, with the result that the spy was arrested and his papers seized. The latter conclusively proved his guilt; and after being tried he was degraded in the barrack-square in Budapest. The real reason of this degradation was, however, never allowed to leak out to the public. Only the members of the court-martial and a few high officials were aware of the truth. The German Ambassador was too deeply implicated in the affair, and Austria could not afford to give offence to her powerful neighbour.'

'And you were actually the man who brought him to justice!' she cried in a strange voice, as one utterly amazed.

'He is a man of marvellous ingenuity,' I answered, 'and he used a woman named Kohn as his go-between in his dealings with Germany.'

'Kohn!' she gasped, with wide-open eyes. 'Surely you must be mistaken!'

'No,' I answered. 'I will tell you the truth without any attempt at concealment. Indeed, the woman was as crafty and ingenious as he himself. She only escaped with the aid of the German Embassy, who knew that had she been arrested she would have made some very ugly and compromising statements.'

'I really can't believe it,' she said in a tone of wonderment. 'I was acquainted with him before his arrest and imprisonment, but knew nothing of her.'

'It was scarcely likely that he would tell you,' I observed, still feeling convinced that this escaped spy was her lover.

'If what you say is true, then the mystery is increased,' she said reflectively, as though speaking to herself. 'Still, it shows the depth of his cunning, and the fierceness of the revenge he seeks to bring upon you.'

'Upon me?' I repeated. 'What has he told you?'

'He has told me nothing,' she answered. 'He has never mentioned your name; but he has vowed vengeance terrible and complete against the person who exposed him to the Minister of War. I now see how all his demands were directed towards one object, to gain that satisfaction which, it seems, he is determined to gain—namely, to encompass your ruin.'

'He threatened me long ago, at the moment when the court-martial pronounced sentence upon him; but I have no fear,' I laughed.

'Ah! be cautious,' she cried concernedly. 'Be cautious, for my sake, Philip. Once, I now remember, he told me that, if he could not effect your downfall and disgrace, he was acquainted with one who could. To whom did he refer?'

The truth flashed through my mind in an instant. He referred to Judith, that crafty blue-eyed woman who held my future in her hands. Next moment, however, I recovered myself, and answered:

'Mere idle brag. I take no heed of swaggering talk such as his. He was always a braggart.'

'But now, Philip, he is absolutely desperate,' she exclaimed. 'If he would attack me in the manner he has done to-night, he will not hesitate to take your life, if necessary.'

'Why has he escaped from prison?' I inquired. 'Tell me. You, of course, know the truth.'

'He was released nearly eight months ago, and conducted to the frontier by order of the Emperor.'

'By order of the Emperor?' I echoed, puzzled. 'Why?'

'I interceded for him personally and secured his release,' she said simply.

'You!' I cried. 'Why?'

'There was a reason,' she answered—'a very strong reason; but I cannot tell you. It is a secret.'

'Strange,' I said, utterly confounded. 'Strange that the Emperor should exert his prerogative over the finding of the court-martial, and release one detected in such a flagrant act of treason. Did you actually plead personally for him?'

'I did.'

'For what reason?' I demanded eagerly. 'Tell me. There is more mystery in this than I had ever imagined.'

'No, Philip,' she answered in a low voice, shaking her head. 'I can never tell you, of all men—never.'



THE GRAÑA: AN OLD COUNTRY-HOUSE IN SPAIN.

By G. C. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, Author of *Santa Teresa*, &c.

IT is a May morning; not a May morning such as one sees in England—all dew and freshness, mild, wet greens, and palely-tinted sky; but a Spanish May morning, brilliant and hot, striking metallic gleams out of the leathery leaves of the big magnolias which stand on either side of the little wicket-gate facing us across the courtyard, to the garden, and making the old gray walls which gird it in glitter from every projection of their surface.

Already, early as it is, the sun with its tongue of fire has licked off the dew-drops from grass and flower. In the courtyard, surrounded by its low balustrade and corner pyramids, out in the dazzling glitter beyond where the shadow of the house cuts against it—a cool gray blotch—a pink sow is rooting in the ground, and cocks and hens are strutting about like owners of the place. In the clear light the pig's skin flushes a delicate coral, and the crests and plumage of the barn-door fowls sparkle iridescently.

From the stable, beneath the gallery, divided from us only by a few boards, one can hear the munching, regular and monotonous as clockwork, of the sleek, fat oxen standing knee-deep amongst the clover cut this morning by Pepa, the brown, lithe daughter of the *casero*, with hair as black as a raven's wing and as coarse as a horse's mane. Neglect everywhere, but a neglect eminently pleasing in the result. In one corner of the courtyard lies a heap of maize cobs; and in the angle where the balustrade throws a shadow, a tall hydrangea rears cymes of rosy blossoms. The wild disorder of the tangled garden, its sandy paths trailed over with rebellious rose-shoots, triumphant and glorious in their rebellion; and the unmolested growth which embowers it in on every side, seem to interpose a thick soft curtain between us and the outer rumours on the road which runs beneath the house on the other side of those high walls, as if leaf to leaf laughed softly at that mad, parched, thirsty world which creeps along it at stated intervals from dawn to sunset.

Above the wall, on the other side of the road, all invisible from here, pine-trees clamber up the hill, where one can catch the glint of the furze that grows betwixt them—a straggling battalion of soldiers—from down below where the oak coppice in the bottom looks far away to seaward, a serried army, a choice background of soft green spray, whence the old house—red roof and dazzling whitewash—winks and blinks from its height at the dusty *carretera*.

See the house, itself worth a visit, with its savour of monastic and rural life mixed in due proportions; for not so very long ago—only some

thirty-five years or more—it was inhabited by a limited community of Benedictines, who farmed the possessions which you see stretching round and about you. That tracery of vineyard, those cherry-trees dotted on the slope, the golden-headed maize plots, the oak and chestnut coppices above the sea, were theirs. The solid granite-work of the fountain down there, the stone table and benches beside it flecked with the cool mosaic of vine-leaves which trellis it over—see! where the great white arums rise from the pulpy green of heart-shaped leaves in that mossy nook ever dripped on by the water when the basin can hold no more—were made for the uses of sybaritic or contemplative friars; there, in the evening light, the wine-flagon flushed rosy beside the rubicund prior, his face wreathed with jollity; there, with breviary and rapt eyes, the monk contemplated God in nature, made visible in the rich, ample landscape before him.

It was a branch of the great monastery in Orense. Here the Mother-House, with keen-sighted prudence, sent her stout rustics, abler to guide the plough than wield the pen, more dexterous with the pruning-knife than in sifting the intricacies of conscience, happier with the tools of good husbandry than with the theological subtleties of Grace and Freewill. Here, too, came the sickly ones, given to too much prayer and fasting and burning of midnight oil, to get strength and healing, looking somewhat strange and out of place amongst their brown and hardy brothers, and perfuming the rural grange with a fine leaven of intellectual and spiritual intelligence. Perhaps Fejoó, the bold old Benedictine who battled with the vulgar errors of his day, and even yet of ours, looked as we do now out of the gallery casement where the sun blazes in from dawn to night.

The dimness of a religious life perfumes the house itself. A few little dark cells—very few of them: as I have said, it was only an offshoot; big granaries above-stairs for storing the wheat; the refectory, windowless, chestnut-floored and chestnut-beamed, opening by two doors on to the sunlit gallery. A sweet odour of hay, of fresh clover, a rumour of oxen chewing, rise up through the chinks of the floor from the dark, cool stable beneath, beside which is the wine-press, the famous *lagar* still purple with the blood of last year's grapes, and waiting for the riches of the coming October.

Back to the kitchen. Grated loopholes close to the roof; for the curious cook may hear the rumours but not see the life which passes down the road beneath. Vault-like and somewhat chill, with its bell-chimney coming to a man's middle, absorbing in its shadow the hearthstone, where

the pots are bubbling in a fitful flame of dried furze-branches and vine-shoots. Then to the little chapel which flanks it, opposite the farmer's house, in the courtyard at the back. Rarely is it used now. Nay, the keys are rusty. How the doors clang back and the dust flies up! Nothing, you see, except an altar and a few tawdry images, and the breadth of the narrow pavement where the farmer-friars worshipped, and called the world in to worship by their side beside that little bell which now hangs unrung above the roof, through the courtyard doors surmounted by the Cross.

Let us get back to the gallery again. Our footsteps ring through stone passages. It is sad to think of all these musty things, alive thirty-five years ago, now dead as death itself. Down the outer stair, brushing away the laurustinus and ivy-sprays which push against us resentful of intrusion, rousing the bees and insects from their food and sleep with a startled reprobative hum. No, not across the courtyard, where the stable-door frames a deep patch of sepia-brown; but, twisting round here on the top of the balustrade, past the tall veronica—Did you ever see such a tangle of blue blossom?—into the little sandy path where the roses almost forbid access, gathering a leaf of the pungent aromatic Alhecrin—that's for memory—to see the wonders of the old wall which separates the garden from the road. Nay, it is my choice spot of all. I have sketched it so often that I know every breadth of it; know how it looks when the Venus navel-wort drips heavy with the rain, or when the moss which fills up every crevice is twisted, contorted like a rope, and burns the hands like fire, as it does now. I know the lizards, too, that dart quickly in and out of every nook: the old mother-lizard with the emerald back and the jewelled head, and eyes something like a dog's, with all the tribe of little ones, whose gambols and darts and springs for flies you may watch for hours if you only remain on the bank beside the frosted glory of the mesembryanthemums creeping leisurely over the sand. Nay, every lichen-stain lives in memory, and the way in which the heather and the broom cling to the base of it. Now come through the wicket-gate, past the blue-green aloe, all-important here where it cuts against leagues of sea; perhaps it still retains on one of its fleshy leaves, deep cut into it, an inscription I wrote there years ago. Go down the slope under the apple-trees: ancient grotesques—so the friars clipped them years ago; twist round along this terraced ledge under the shadow of the orange-trees: see how they lie ripe and rotting amongst the beds of wild mint at their base! Taste one. The savour of the mint has entered into its very pores and blood. They are unique amongst oranges.

See! the tall verbascum—that plant which grows out of the interstices of the ledge like a huge candelabrum with its sconces such as one sees in

churches—has dusted our shoulders with its yellow blossoms.

What a wild chant! The women are singing at the fountain as they fill the water-buckets to the brim. A *Muñeira*—a *Riveirana*—I forget which. There is a strange, sad note in these peasant songs of Galicia which lingers with you even when the song has died away, as it does now; for they go mounting the slope under the cherry-trees, buckets on head, arms akimbo, a fine free, graceful posture, as statuesque as Hebes, seen from here. There again! the echo of the song is repeated from the far-away corner of the maize-fields, and goes with us as we pace along the path under the vines to the oak and chestnut wood, with its undergrowth of butcher's broom and twining vetch.

Yes, here my domain ends at this wall, far beneath the house, which shuts us off from the quarry you see below, whose red sides would give a dangerous fall, and the high-road winding away like a serpent to Bayona; and, farther still, the stretch of sea and shore which seems to run up to the horizon-line from an invisible plain beneath. This wall is my outlook on the world. Here the sounds creep up with shrill distinctness. Here you may watch the ox-carts go by laden with grain or clover, dead fish from the shore to manure the fields, or what not, the solid wooden wheels creaking—not unmusically—nay, most harmoniously, or so the peasants think; for when the Alcalde attempted to abolish the old Roman invention for other methods it all but ended in a revolution. Here, at five o'clock, the diligence whirls past, raising clouds of dust before and after, with whips cracking in the air, shouts and imprecations, and the poor thin nags sweating and straining every sinew so as to make triumphant entry into the town.

Best of all, the sea: to follow from here its changes and its moods; to trace it up between the rugged coast-lines to where those islands—the Cies—lie like crouched lions blocking the path to inward and outward vessels, leaving just a narrow passage on either side; to see it laugh crystalline and blue amongst the fisher-boats whose lateen sails flutter over its surface as sea-gulls' wings, now seen full front or obliquely, or skimming down until they touch the waves. At noon sometimes it looks like a sheet of molten metal, and the shadow of the coast is mirrored in it, until one can scarce tell which is land and which ocean. But more especially at eventide. Beyond that low line of rocks you see yon little promontory with a church jutting out upon it, and behind it some fishers' huts. On the hither side, still closer to us, one looks down on the broad top of an umbrella-pine, its trunk lost in the dip below. Most wonderful looks that little church, as, all detail lost, it deepens into violet soft as velvet against the pale-greens and umbers of the sunset sea, a reflection of the sky and

nothing more. Between the lines of the bell-tower and the bell is left just a narrow rift of light, which increases the depth and solemnity of the shadow. The umbrella-pine is a deep-indigo, sharply-outlined blot against the vast pallor of the ocean. On such a night the fishermen's shouts from the beach below, hauling in their nets, and the Ave Maria, float up, fluttering faintly like a butterfly, into the whispering leaves here.

Yes, now it is time to go back, not by the terraced ledges this time, but under the cherry-trees, past the *canasta*—the *horreo*—the strange-looking granary peculiar to Galicia, which rises like a Noah's ark in stone from the supporting pillars. Here, when the day's labour is over, the farmer and his family lounge and smoke and

laugh, and sing, too, these strange songs you heard just now; and the tinkle of the guitar is simultaneous with the first twinkle of the stars rising in the balmy night.

Come in winter and let us pile the friars' hearth in the refectory with chestnut-branches; and as they crackle and splutter up the reddening chimney the women shall sing you those old elf-songs of theirs, swaying their bodies to the rhythm like reeds; shall tell you, as we stir the ashes over the ripened chestnuts—indispensable adjunct of our rural feast—legends of werewolves that shall make your blood run cold, or precious scraps, fragments of folklore, which, perhaps, you may read and smile at hereafter when you see the mutilated version printed in a book.

BATTER SHIEL'S DIAMONDS.

By CHARLES EDWARDES.



WASN'T far short of being the happiest fellow in Inverley the night before I steamed for Cape-town, and to me, then, Batter Shiel seemed an admirable man in spite of his uncouthness. Common, of course, he was by origin. But, then, are not we all the same—more or less? At least that was how I argued when my Inverley chums and certain of my lady acquaintances tried to set me against this son of a late Inverley cobbler. He might have been a sweeper of the King's Road crossing for all I cared, so long as he was still the father of Ella Shiel.

Really, though, it was surprising Inverley did not immediately knuckle down in a measure to poor Batter Shiel, for he had fifty thousand pounds as well as a curious little wizened face, a nose with a quaint wart on it, and a brace of eyes that reminded me of a fox.

It was a case of love at first sight with Ella and me. I saw her at the Inverley Hotel the day after Batter's arrival, learnt who she was, introduced myself to her father as an ambitious young engineer and the son of the Inverley doctor who in all probability helped him into the world, and was gorgeously welcomed by the lucky diamond-miner with champagne and shoulder smacks.

This was the beginning; and in a week—on my honour, with little thought of the diamonds—I had whispered my love to Ella, and she had slipped her small hand into mine, laid her head on my shoulder, and said 'Yes.'

Somehow, though we both ought to have done so, we had no particular fear of 'papa.' We were most unconventionally hopeful.

'He likes you very much, Willie,' said Ella on that eventful afternoon, 'and he spoils me terribly. He is a dear old dad.'

All the same, I could not bring myself to

declare my love to him as promptly as it had declared itself to me. But after waiting another week I crossed my Rubicon, and was most delighted at the old fellow's conduct. He raised the least bit of a frown at the outset, but that was all. Then it was hand-grips and back-smacking in his most vigorous manner. He wound up by persuading me to go off to the Rally Round Mine in South Africa to wind up his affairs, and on my return Ella and I would be married: 'Though it won't go far off bu'sting my heart, Willie Beckett!' he added, with something very like a tear in one eye.

I was sorry for the poor old chap, but too glad for myself and Ella to feel that sorrow deeply. Besides, he might marry again and console himself; and it will be seen how little mercenary I was when I say that I liked to think of his thus alleviating his solitude.

However, the evening before the sailing of the *Dunottar Castle* arrived, and I was with the Shiels to say good-bye. They were in a snug little villa residence by this time, furnished with all sorts of odds and ends. Ella had gone to bed after one fondest of all embrace and the whispered words, 'Only six months, darling!'

'Now then, Master Bill,' exclaimed Batter Shiel when he had helped himself to whisky and water, 'I'm going to show you summat. We're here to-day and no one knows where this day week. Come across to this 'ere chest-o-drawers.'

The chest-of-drawers, as he called it, was something more than that. It was a very ancient, even valuable, piece of furniture of massive mahogany, with tiers of dainty carved columns at the side, having polished brass capitals and plinths. Still, it was a queer thing to have in a dining-room. Even Ella pouted prettily at it.

'You watch me—close,' said Batter Shiel.

He proceeded to pull out entirely the third

drawer from the top. Then, with a screwdriver, he loosened a screw which seemed to fasten the pedestal of one of the above-mentioned columns. He unfastened the screw so that about a third of an inch of it stood free. This done, with his finger-nail he pressed the second step of the pedestal, and, lo! this was readily pulled out. There was a drawer about a foot long and an inch high and broad, and this drawer was packed with diamonds cut and uncut. They sparkled superbly in the cotton-wool amid which they were bedded.

'There, Master Bill!' exclaimed Batter Shiel. 'This is my bank, and it's a good un. Forty-five thousand pounds wouldn't buy that little lot.'

Of course I admired the stones tremendously. I should have done the same if they had belonged to any other fellow's prospective father-in-law. But one thing I could not do, and that was persuade the obstinate old fellow that it was both risky and ridiculous to keep his fortune thus.

'You might get two thousand a year interest from them,' I said.

'Cats might fly!' he retorted, with a grin. 'There's none else knows about this, not even Ella. A wench's face is better than a wench's tongue—you'll find that out some day, you rascal; and just you promise to hold *your* tongue about it.'

I promised readily enough, and after one more pipe went home. The diamonds were interesting; but Ella was more so, and it was of her I dreamed that night.

Then for weeks downright excitement had hold of me. It was the first time I had left Old England, and the new scenes and experiences drove most things else out of my mind. Not Ella, of course, but most else. Further, the work I had to do at the Rally Round mine proved very absorbing. I had, in fact, as an innocent youngster, to pit my wits against a knot of men as knowing, if not quite as old, as Batter Shiel. They were too keen for me by much. I gradually came to that conclusion, although nothing remained for me to do but wire off the results of my trip as they were formulated by the five rogues with whom I had to do—

'Rally Round all broke. Not paid expenses this eight months.'

I didn't suppose Batter Shiel would like this news; but neither did I know that he would be lying stiff, quiet, and white on his bed at Inverley when the message reached him.

For a month after this I was shooting springbok and anything else I could get at. Then I hurried south, with Ella more than ever in my mind; and it was at the agent's in Capetown that I first learned the news of Batter Shiel's sudden death more than six weeks previously. Shocked as I was, I was more shocked still to think how I had been amusing myself all this time of poor Ella's utter loneliness and bereavement; and so I wired to her at once, and left South Africa the next day.

Perhaps I shall not be thought very inhuman if I confess that during the voyage home I saw plenty of sunshine among the clouds that were over my darling; also that it grew more and more obvious to me that Batter Shiel's sudden demise would profit me much. Indeed, I dreamed of a snug little country-house, perhaps also a yacht, and ease and comfort for the rest of our mortal lives—Ella's and mine—as the outcome of that delightful drawerful of diamonds.

It shows what a sanguine fellow I was when I say that I half-expected poor Ella herself to meet the ship at Southampton. However, I soon got over that disappointment, and telegraphed to my sister Kate at Inverley that I should arrive there at half-past three. 'Tell Ella,' I added.

Kate was on the Inverley platform sure enough, smiling hard, but no Ella. The news that was now sprung on me affected me at first like a blow.

'My dear Bill,' said Miss Kate, 'I expect you'll feel it a lot—to begin with; but I am surprised she didn't find a way of telling you herself. She has gone to London, poor girl! to earn her own living.'

'What?' I shouted.

'Hush, dear; I'm not deaf,' continued my sister. 'Mr Shiel was what father calls a bit of a fraud. He hadn't anything to speak of, and your cable from Africa settled it with Ella. He had lost four hundred pounds on the Stock Exchange the very week of his death. Fortunately the girl knows something about dressmaking, and—'

But this was too much. What an imbecile I was, not to have remembered it sooner! Of course, no one except myself knew about the diamonds—not even Ella.

'Dressmaking! That's a capital joke!' I exclaimed as I laughed.

However, in the cab I gave up thinking it a joke. Kate spoke of a sale: all Batter Shiel's house furniture had been put up to auction. The lawyer said it was necessary.

'All?' said I, feeling slightly uncomfortable.

'I believe every stick of it, Bill.'

'Here, in Inverley?'

'Oh no; it was considered too good for Inverley folks. They sent it to Sheffield. I believe it fetched eleven hundred pounds, of which the creditors took quite a thousand pounds, so that the girl had none too much for herself. By the way, Bill, was your engagement really serious?'

Miss Kate irritated me. She was so abominably matter-of-fact for one thing; her news on the top of that, and, lastly, her question, stirred me to anger.

'I am astounded that you can ask me such a question,' I said.

But I was to be irritated still more ere I got my head on the pillow that night.

The lawyer who had acted for Ella told me that Perkins & Bailey of Sheffield had sold Mr Shiel's goods. He had no schedule of the articles.

'What is the matter, Mr Beckett?' he asked in his turn, professionally suspicious.

'Oh, nothing,' said I, for I had no idea of getting forestalled. 'I suppose they don't shut before six, and I'll be off there at once; and please to give me Miss Shiel's address.'

The house in which Ella lodged had a very humble look. It made me shudder to think of her stitching for a livelihood in such a street.

'Oh, by the way,' said the lawyer as I was making off for the station, 'Perkins & Bailey had a baddish fire last week. I fancy they lost a heap of office stuff.'

With this new anxiety in my head, I hurried away to Sheffield, telegraphing again to Ella *en route*. It seemed to me my life of late had been punctuated by telegrams. In this last message I bade the poor girl expect me that evening up to eleven o'clock.

No sooner was I on Perkins & Bailey's step than I thought I smelt burning. It was the omen worrying at me, of course; perhaps even a gentle providential hint to prepare for the worst.

'Sale of the effects of the late Mr Shiel of Inverley?' said the clerk. 'Oh, certainly; we undertook it.'

There was something in his face that made me tremble as I went on.

'I want to trace a certain article—on Miss Shiel's behalf,' I said.

Up went the clerk's shoulders.

'We are very sorry, sir, all our records of the past two months are destroyed. It is an unparalleled loss, and has caused us the greatest inconvenience. Messrs Bent & Bust's safes have proved a terrible mistake in our case.'

'Do you really mean to tell me that you cannot find out who purchased the articles in the sale list? Can't your bankers help me? It is most important.'

'I think you had better see Mr Bailey, sir,' said the clerk.

But I got no more satisfaction from that gentleman. The list of cheques paid into the bankers could, of course, be produced; there was, however, nothing to help in ascertaining what the cheques were for. The sale lists were all destroyed with the other office furniture.

'Now you must excuse me,' said Mr Bailey.

My journey to town and Ella after this was tormenting. To think that Ella's forty-five thousand pounds was in the hands of some one who knew nothing about it, and about whom I knew nothing at all, and that this ignorance meant immediate destitution to the poor girl, and such an eclipse of the prosperous future that was to have been ours! I was not very charitable in my estimate of Mr Shiel's common-sense during that journey. Surely he might have left a line behind him for Ella, to explain things in case of need!

It was ten o'clock when I reached Wellesley

Mews, Southwark, and could hold Ella's face against mine.

'Willie, you must give me up,' were almost her opening words.

Then I burst forth with the whole tantalising story.

'You may give me up, my darling, if you like,' I said, 'but I'm not going to let your fortune be lost to you without a struggle.'

'Oh Willie,' she retorted, 'are you sure about it?'

'Am I sure that these are my Ella's gray eyes?' said I, laughing.

That settled it with her. She became happy at once. It seemed to her such a simple matter to get on the track of a great curious old piece of furniture like that chest-of-drawers.

'We must advertise,' she said.

'Yes, and have the present owner smash it all to bits just to find out what we want it for.'

'Then, dear, we must go to all the second-hand furniture stores in Sheffield. Aren't dealers the persons who buy principally at sales?'

This at any rate was a sensible idea. Indeed, it seemed the only chance left to us. In my impetuosity, I almost repented having left Sheffield even to see Ella. The thing might have been bought that very evening.

'To-morrow,' I said, 'we will go north together, by the first train, and begin to prospect.'

This we arranged to do, though I had hard work to convince Ella that her home ought to be with my parents instead of in Wellesley Mews, Southwark. We had a moment or two of downright gaiety before I said 'Good-night' and went off to my hotel.

'It will be so exciting, dear,' said Ella. 'What shall we call it? "The hunt for the old bureau" or "On the trail of the diamonds"?''

'We'll call it what you like, sweetheart,' I replied, with her cheek against mine; 'so long as I don't lose the best diamond of all, please God, we won't break our hearts, whatever happens.'

However, in spite of this fine fit of the heroics, no sooner was I alone than I realised to the full the gravity of our position. Had we one chance in ten of discovering the chest-of-drawers, and at the same time obtaining the diamonds? Not more, not more—at the most. This my first day in England after South Africa ended dismally, notwithstanding Ella's love and confidence.

Nine o'clock the next morning saw us both in a Midland train for Yorkshire, both desperately resolved to see only the bright side of a business that promised so blackly. Yet we were not half-way on our journey when poor Ella's courage failed her.

'Willie,' she whispered when we were in a tunnel, 'must I go home with you?'

'You must, darling,' I replied.

'I am so timid and—ashamed about it,' she whispered again, with a sigh that pained me.

Still, the sigh notwithstanding, I should, of course, have insisted had not chance come to her aid. We were nearing Sheffield when a stout lady, with much good gold jewellery about her, entered the carriage, and, after a glance at the pair of us, lifted her veil and exclaimed :

'Why, it's Ella! How are you, my dear, and how's your'— The poor girl's deep mourning made her stop and devote herself to caresses instead, for Ella had greeted her ardently as Cousin Jane.

Cousin Jane was a motherly person. She had many warm words of condolence for Ella, about half implying that when a parent dies and leaves his only child a great deal of money, the only child has much to be thankful as well as sorry for. A look from me checked Ella from stating her circumstances exactly. It also suggested that I shouldn't mind being introduced to Cousin Jane.

The worthy woman jumped to the situation almost at a word.

'Oh, any one can see you two are keeping company,' she said laughingly. 'But look here, Ella, why can't you come and spend a few weeks at our place first of all? He'—nodding at me—'won't lose hold of you afterwards, I'll warrant.'

This, with a series of laughs like the explosion of popguns. She was not a very refined lady, though evidently good-hearted; the wife of a master-butcher, in fact, in a large way.

I admit I was angry with Ella at first when she not only hesitated, with blushing glances at me, but actually accepted Mrs Webberley's invitation off-hand.

'May I, Willie?' she said to me appealingly.

That was how it happened that we did not go home at all. I saw Ella off into her train at Sheffield, and then, with grim determination, proceeded on my quest.

I paid another visit to Messrs Perkins & Bailey. To begin with, Mr Bailey, who had conducted the sale of Mr Shiel's things, did not pretend to remember the articles in detail. But I was allowed to question the clerk who had attended with him. The youth was shy, yet he had a good memory, and, to my joy, remembered the chest-of-drawers.

'I think it fetched about nine pounds, sir,' he said.

'Yes; and the purchaser? I will make it worth your while if you can help me to find him.'

After much cogitation, he replied, 'I have an idea he was a tall, gray-bearded man.'

'With a hooked nose, perhaps?' I suggested, in a sudden mood of depression.

'Well, now I think of it, I believe he had,' the youth added, as if anxious to please me.

'Of course. Then it is in the hands of the Jews. Now, where is your man who delivers your things?'

Having got thus far, I was bound to meet with a rebuff. Two of Messrs Perkins & Bailey's

porters were sent for, but neither of them recalled the handling of the chest-of-drawers. They agreed that one Peter must have had the job.

'Well, then, send for Peter,' I replied, with animation.

Then came the set-back.

'Oh,' said the clerk, 'he left the week before last. He boused too much. He said he would go to London.'

After this I departed from the office of these unsatisfactory auctioneers, feeling almost as ill as if I had drunk mustard and water. Our hopes seemed so surely to have received their death-blow.

Lunch, however, re-established my energies; and that afternoon I began a systematic visitation of all the furniture brokers in the town. The first day yielded no results. I wrote to Ella to tell her so, and added that I was thinking of offering my services to the public as a mining engineer—in South Africa or Australia. The second and third days turned out just as blank. I was sick of the smell of varnish, wood-worms, and so forth in the different warehouses I visited. In one establishment I knocked over and smashed a Dresden china shepherd, making the shepherdess a widow—an expensive tragedy. My letter to Ella on that third evening was quite disconsolate. She had already replied about the mining engineer business. I was to do whatever seemed best for myself, and take no thought of her; but to be assured that she would always love and pray for me.

This letter didn't comfort me. I now informed her somewhat peremptorily that the best thing I desired was still Ella Shiel, and that where I went my wife would also be expected to go.

By the fourth day I knew all Sheffield's second-hand furniture shops, and hated them. They had proved barren to me; and yet I was haunted with the belief that the diamonds would be found by us—though when and how, of course, I knew not.

I got to casting eyes into the lower front rooms of the houses of one long street after another. This also was a futile and painful proceeding. It caused me to be followed for some little distance by a vigilant fool of a constable: nothing better.

To cut the harassing story short, let me say that I spent a week in Sheffield, and never once obtained a clue to the chest-of-drawers. Then I gave it all up and returned home. My parents, who had not the key to my conduct, showed in their letters considerable concern for me. Miss Kate had given them to understand, it seemed, that love had made me more than a trifle crazy.

Both Ella and I had now done with our earlier visions of bliss in opulence. My advertisements were in two or three papers, and I was prepared to rough it; and she had promised to marry me whenever I said the word. I pulled myself together on the way home, comforted myself with copybook maxims about the insufficiency

of wealth for happiness, and tried to forget the past few wasted and rather delirious days. An excellent cigar much aided me in the recovery of my old spirits.

'All is for the best!' I insisted, managing, though not without an effort, to silence the carplings of my other self.

So I kissed my mother, and was beginning to laugh away her loving anxieties, when all at once I stood rigid.

There, in a recess off the dining-room, with a row of blue-and-white china trifles on the top of it, was the very article I had sought and dreamed about night and day for a week.

'Bill, *dear!*' cried Miss Kate, evidently quite frightened, and my poor mother again folded me in her arms, this time with a sigh.

But I soon recovered my senses, though the laughter of a frantic sort which seized me as I gazed at the chest-of-drawers only troubled my fond relatives the more.

'So my father was the gentleman with the gray beard and hooked nose?' I murmured.

'Bill, what are you talking about?' whispered Miss Kate.

For joy I turned round and declared that I did not know, chuckling the while like an idiot—so Miss Kate still says. Then I tried the drawer, the third from the top; pulled it out, as it was unlocked and empty; opened my knife and worked on the side-screw, and thus at length had the secret drawer at my mercy.

'Now what do you think of me?' I exclaimed, as I exposed the gems shining in all their brilliance and purity just as they had shone before. 'This is Ella's fortune.'

I am ashamed to add that my sister was inclined to argue about the rights of property. It seemed to her—or she pretended to think so—that her father was entitled to all that he had bought for nine pounds eight. But subsequently we convinced her. As for the good old governor himself, he welcomed a daughter-in-law as his percentage on the treasure-trove.

I still now and then have a bad dream about the diamonds. Only last week, for instance, all the stones walked off into the Atlantic and disappeared where the water was placarded 'Five thousand fathoms deep'!

AWAY FOR WHITSUNTIDE; OR, A HOLIDAY IN ANTWERP AND GHENT.

WHERE shall we go at Whitsuntide?' said one of two men as they passed me in the street yesterday. I did not yield to the impulse; but I was greatly inclined to make a third in the conversation, and say, 'Try Antwerp.' I went home with freshly-kindled memories of the beautiful city, and the result is the present article.

We may start from Harwich or Hull, from Grimsby or Newcastle, as convenience may decide; but in any case it is not a lengthy nor in ordinary circumstances what we call a bad crossing; and there we are gliding in our chosen steamer down the Scheldt, and getting our first view of the Cathedral, which is the largest and most perfect specimen of Gothic architecture in the Netherlands.

Before we begin to 'do' the city, though, we shall look for a suitable hotel; but as these are numerous, and with charges to suit all purses, it is merely the *embarras du choix*. If a *pension de famille* is wanted, there is also a choice of several, with charges varying from four to six francs per day.

Then, having eaten and rested, and rid ourselves of that feeling of general dirtiness which always comes over us in journeying, off we go to look round. The British tourist never enjoys repose until he has looked on everything there is to be seen.

Probably he has already studied his guide-book, and starts briskly in the direction whence the chimes call him. Being well read up on the subject, he is aware that the Cathedral dates from 1322, and has been seriously damaged in troublous times; he knows all about the ancient well which stands outside its principal portals, and that it was the work of Quentin Matsys when he was a blacksmith and not a painter; but he wants to see it, and it is well worth a visit, even if Antwerp contained nothing else.

The tower, four hundred and two feet in height, may be ascended by the tourist who has the courage, and breath enough, to mount six hundred and twenty-two steps; then there is indeed a reward in that view along the river as far as Flushing on the one side, or of the cities of Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels in the opposite direction. Within the building our attention is directed to the rich wood-carving and stained glass; also to Rubens's 'Descent from the Cross,' 'The Assumption,' and many other noted paintings. The chimes consist of ninety-nine bells, to which Charles V. stood godfather at the ceremony of their consecration.

Most of the houses in that quarter of the city are fine old buildings which used to belong to city corporations, and date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Let me advise the tourist to step into one of the many pastrycooks' shops, and taste the cream-tarts

—*religieuses*, they call them—before he proceeds on his round of sight-seeing. As Antwerp is the very centre of art, every church is worth a visit, every collection of pictures is interesting; therefore some slight refreshment on the way becomes a necessity. The Museum, with its pictures by Rubens, Vandyck, and Titian, should not be missed, nor the Plantin Museum.

The broad street known as the Place de Meier boasts a house built from the designs of Rubens in 1611. In 1703 it underwent some alterations, and afterwards was entirely restored. A bust of the great painter adorns the top of the building; and it was within those walls he died in 1640.

The ancient fortifications of Antwerp have given place to modern boulevards, where many handsome buildings have been raised—the Bank, for example, and the new Palais de Justice. There is a pretty little park where one may spend a restful hour; and, of course, the Zoological Gardens should be seen, for they possess the finest collection of animals in Europe.

The second day in the city must be given to the docks. The quays were constructed in 1802, and extend from the Arsenal. When the visitor has seen these docks he will begin to understand how, in commercial prosperity, Antwerp has managed to keep abreast with all her rivals. The Grand Bassin and the Petit Bassin were the first to be constructed, and cost thirteen million francs. Other docks of large dimensions have since been added. A venerable building in the shipping quarter, dating from 1568, known as the Maison Hanséatique, and originally used as a warehouse for the commerce of the Hanseatic cities, was destroyed by fire a few years ago.

Most of the residents in Antwerp are engaged in commerce; it is not essentially a town of pleasure, like Brussels. In some ways it resembles a Dutch or a German city; the French element is conspicuous by its absence. Indeed, the true Anversois, though able, is not willing to converse in French. Should the tourist inquire the way in that language, he will reply in Flemish, and take considerable trouble to make himself understood. The shops are excellent, and arranged with great taste. In the matter of habits and customs there is a strange blending of past and present in Antwerp: stuccoed houses with brightly painted balconies and broad streets and modern improvements all speak of to-day; but you are back in bygone ages when you traverse the narrow passages and turnings, and enter dark dwellings, sunk now in obscurity, but bearing the coats-of-arms of some long-dead merchant-prince who was a power in Antwerp before the Duke of Alva entered it.

Cabs and open vehicles are on hire at a fixed rate; tramways now run to all the suburbs; and a little steamboat trip on the Scheldt may fill up a leisure hour at a cost of only the modest sum of sevenpence-halfpenny.

Now, as the Whitsuntide holiday tourist has not

unlimited time at his disposal, and must soon be returning whence he came, let me persuade him to see Ghent on his way back to the coast.

He must betake himself to the Pays de Waes station, and from thence he will be ferried across to the Tête de Flandre. How charming Antwerp looks as you give it a backward farewell glance! The journey by train to Ghent occupies rather less than two hours; and on arriving there the Hôtel Royale or Hôtel de Vienne will lodge him very comfortably.

In the opinion of the true Gaulois, no city in Belgium can compare with this; to the stranger its quaint streets, its many bridges, and its modern improvements make it attractive. There are numerous handsome churches; a remnant of far-back days and customs exists as the Béguinage; there is a fine old belfry: even the tourist who thinks he can 'do' Ghent in a couple of hours knows this! But take the trouble to cross the bridge from the Quai des Dominicains into the Corn Market, and turn round to look at the venerable houses on the opposite side, or pass by the Quai aux Herbes, and examine the lace-like carving of the frontage of the Maison des Bateliers, which bears the date 1531. Next walk on to a still more antique building with a high open roof. This is the Grande Boucherie; and, though the butchers have long since been driven elsewhere by the rats, the building defies the ravages of time. A little square house below was formerly the dwelling of the hangman; a few years ago the fatal rope might be seen and handled, but it has now been taken to the Archaeological Museum.

Here, in the 'Garden of Belgium,' horticulture is carried to great perfection; therefore the Friday flower-market will be a sight with which to wind up the Whitsuntide holiday-week, and send the tourist back to the British Isles with the conviction that it is well sometimes to see other countries as well as his own. After the guide-book, and, in a sense, much before it, the best literature to revive recollection is Motley's *History of the Dutch Republic*, which is more interesting than any novel, and gives the historical background of all that we have just been looking at.

MIZPAH.

Over the hills, when the daylight dies,
And the mist comes up from the sea,
When the red light fades in the western skies,
My heart goes forth to thee.

Shadows fit o'er the twilight bay,
As the sobbing tide goes out;
And sorrow comes, with the close of day,
But never a shade of doubt.

Come back soon, or come back late,
Come back never at all;
Yet the love in my heart will always wait,
To answer at thy call.

JEAN H. MACNAIR.